### The Performing Arts:

#### An Essential Public Good, Critical to a Healthy Society

Theatre Bay Area's Research Initiative Into the Uses of Social Marketing in the Performing Arts

By Sabrina Klein and Belinda Taylor with John Warren

#### The Question

**Background:** Theatre Bay Area (TBA) is a notfor-profit member service organization for the theatre and dance communities of the greater San Francisco Bay Area. With around 300 company members and nearly 3,000 individual artist members, TBA is often confronted with questions of advocacy, marketing and program development on a community-wide basis as well as in response to specific incidents and unique needs.

An ongoing concern of staff and board has been the role that live theatre and dance plays within the larger contexts and needs of any community or in society as a whole. While many theatre and dance companies struggle with individual issues at any given time, all the companies we work with have felt the impact of diminishing community engagement, the struggle to maintain identity in an entertainment-obsessed society, and the increasing competition for other community resources (facilities, personnel, funding, media attention, etc.). An uneasy consensus was emerging that an "awareness campaign" on the value that theatre and dance artists and their institutions provide to society might be critical to the success of any future campaigns.

The "Campaign" Idea: All too often, when awareness campaigns for theatre are discussed, the "Got Milk" campaign is suggested as a model. However, while TBA was exploring the larger questions of theatre and society in the abstract, the impact of a marketing technique that has been successfully applied in the public health arena to raise awareness and generate change began registering in an intriguing and elusive manner. The apparent similarities between issues confronting the arts community and issues confronting those working in public health—issues related to attitudes, values,

beliefs and behavior—caused us to ask whether a more likely model for us to explore would be the anti-smoking, seat belt use or HIV prevention campaigns of the past twenty years.

With a mere passing knowledge of "social marketing," as the theoretical and practical applications of these types of campaigns are called, the TBA executive director approached the David and Lucile Packard Foundation with a proposal to explore the potential applications for social marketing in support of the theatre and dance communities. With two significant grants for research and planning, TBA led a community-wide conversation and research effort intended to:

- develop a genuine understanding for and working knowledge of the goals, theories and practical applications of social marketing
- create a social marketing vision that was relevant, vital and potentially achievable
- understand our own theatre and dance community (diverse in its geographic, demographic, budgetary, mission and philosophical goals) to determine if our vision was achievable
- develop a long-range plan for achieving the goal, including identifying partners, actions and evaluation mechanisms

#### Why Social Marketing?

**Shared characteristics:** Although public health workers did not create social marketing, they have nonetheless been on the forefront of its applications. Most public health efforts are aimed at convincing people to give up

unhealthy behaviors and to engage in healthy behaviors. When theatre advocates think of behaviors, they tend to focus first on the actions of a ticket-buying audience and what motivates potential audiences to purchase tickets to specific events. But taking two steps back from ticket buying opens the vista to other activities that influence both the real and the perceived roles of live performance in a community.

An exploration of the characteristics shared between public health and the making and presenting of theatre revealed some surprising similarities between the two endeavors. Both fields deal routinely with:

- controversial issues that are often considered private or personal that are addressed in a public arena
- questions of censorship and which voices should be heard as pervasive and potentially deadly to genuine public discourse
- ongoing controversy about what can be said in public
- struggles over public funding and other resources invested in each arena
- underlying assumptions that artistic work will make a personal difference to individuals
- communication with communities of people comprised of similar individuals
- professional passion and professional burnout dominating each enterprise

**Definitions:** Although social marketing is a complex and evolving set of assumptions and strategies, it has been most clearly defined by one of its most ardent advocates and successful implementers. Alan Andreasen, considered by many to be the "guru" of social marketing, created this definition in 1995: social marketing is the analysis, planning, execution and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of their society.

The primary attribute of social marketing campaigns, then, is that they focus on an

individual's values, behaviors, and benefits to behaviors rather than an exchange of dollars or time for a commodity or experience.

Social marketing aims to make changes in target persons' choices and behaviors by providing concrete actions that can benefit the individual based on what they value. Strategies address target persons' knowledge, skills, and attitudes/beliefs (including beliefs about the consequences of inaction or specific actions), although not necessarily in any order. This is not a linear process, but a cyclical one that can be picked up at any point in the cycle.

Social marketing integrates and expands upon the basics of commercial marketing strategies. The traditional "Four P's": product, pricing, promotion, and placement are not ignored, but neither are they completely sufficient. The fifth, usually silent "p" is public policy (that's two p's in a row, but who's counting?). Public policy -as it plays out in local, state, and federal law, in tax codes, zoning guidelines, and local development and funding strategies—plays a critical role in social marketing. Although, among some purists, the emphasis on voluntary change in behavior precludes pushing for policy changes, most social marketers agree that creating, supporting, and advocating for effective public policy is essential to real social change, which is the ultimate goal of most serious social marketing strategies.

Successful social marketing efforts exhibit a thorough understanding of the targeted persons' wants and needs. Social marketing also places an emphasis on exchange relationships, wherein the person targeted gets something in return for giving something. In exchange relationships, what is given and received must balance, or more correctly, be perceived by the target person to balance.

Changing behavior involves addressing barriers to the actions that you want people to take. It also calls for examining what motivates people toward actions you are aiming to change. Barriers and impulses involve external factors such as: social/structural norms; public policy; product/activity accessibility; and price, time commitment, etc. Internal factors and perceptions also need to be addressed, including but not necessarily limited to: personal values and beliefs; personal risk;

questions of self-efficacy (is what you're asking me to do something I feel capable of doing?); and perceived benefit (if I do what you're asking, how will it benefit me directly?).

Before a behavior can happen, the intention to act must be in place, but intention is still one step away from action. Social marketing contains a call to specific action and does what it can to facilitate the taking of that action.

Like traditional consumer-oriented marketing, social marketing involves work in phases that form a continuous loop. The standard divides these phases into the following stages. TBA planned to focus on Stage One and begin work on Stage Two.

Stage One Planning and strategy

Stage Two: Developing messages and

materials and pre-testing these messages; offering solutions, including a call to action that

will have an impact

Stage Three: Implementation: the marketing

campaign

Stage Four: Assessment and refinement

Defining success: The Task Force ultimately defined success, in both the planning process and in any potential applications, as occurring when partner groups and identified individuals agreed to and embraced the vision and objectives, and adopted a supportive plan of action. The Task Force hoped to recruit others to an understanding of social marketing as a philosophy and a strategy, to engage them in a deeper conversation of its implications for theatre and other performing arts, and to test a vision among potential supporters.

## TBA's Grappling with Social Marketing as a Model

The first barrier was encountered in the search for a qualified social marketing consultant who was a) interested in the applications to the arts; b) available to do the work (effective social marketers are currently in high demand) and c) willing to work for the amount of money available through our grant. TBA had

difficulties explaining the potential connection to the arts; even when it found an enthusiastic and competent consultant, his learning curve on the arts was at least as steep as ours on social marketing. More frustrating and moderately insulting was that many conversations were initiated with intrigued consultants who backed off rapidly when they discovered the seriousness of our intent and the scope and depth of our probing. We are grateful to the large social marketing firm, Porter Novelli in Washington, D.C., which understood the value of the questions we posed and assisted us in our search for a local expert.

Our learning curve: To teach basic concepts of social marketing, consultant Larry Bye of Communication Sciences Group in San Francisco created an orientation that was attended by thirty people, including TBA board members, the entire staff, funders, and invited community members. In addition to the concepts outlined above, the attendees were introduced to other things that differentiate social marketing from traditional mass marketing:

- Social marketing has more emphasis in science—understanding behavior through science-driven methodologies and theories. This is true both in understanding what determines behavior, and how to position messages to appeal to the why's and wherefore's.
- ➤ Behaviors are complex and provide challenging barriers: they are value-laden, culturally embedded and full of (often unarticulated) meaning.
- ➤ Change is a modeling and imitation process. We must first change ourselves to become catalysts to mobilize the system to change itself, and partner with others in the system to make the change. "Social networks" are critical to this modeling and imitation process.
- Barriers to developing a social marketing consciousness include an obsession with treating everyone equally. This is of no real value to the social marketer, who must address individuals at a level of personal value and perceived need.

Following the introduction to social marketing, TBA recruited community and board members to join the staff as a working Task Force to create the definitions, vision, parameters, and goals of the project. This group met every two to three weeks from February 1999 to January 2000.

Immediately, the Task Force encountered difficulties in a direct application of the model as it is used in most public health issues. These difficulties included the fact that in public health applications, both the goal and the means to accomplish it are known and agreed upon before starting this process (e.g., HIV eradication is the goal; the means are partner reduction, consistent condom use, no sharing needles). These goals are usually attached to a relatively uncomplicated vision (e.g., reduction in the number of people infected with HIV). Struggling to articulate what the issues were, what the goals might be, and how to accomplish them, the Task Force discovered that its vision was initially elusive and ultimately somewhat radical and hard to assert in the language of social good. The means to accomplish this vision, once the Task Force finally could articulate it, were also not obvious or easy to define.

The Task Force process: The Task Force engaged in a series of wide and deep brainstorming conversations about what it might want to see change in a world that values and supports theatre and other performing arts. The result was a long, cumbersome list that broke down into more than fifty actions people would take in a society that valued the performing arts, including such activities as protesting school board elimination of arts programs, writing letters to editors requesting coverage for a local theatre company, purchasing more tickets to (and attending) live performances, and voting for arts-friendly politicians. With the consultant, it grouped these 50-plus activities roughly into behaviors it wanted to promote. These were:

- 1. Growth in audiences
- 2. More policy/advocacy participation in the theatre/dance community
- 3. Growth in media coverage/improved quality, a "better conversation"

- Growth in donations/contributions (public and private)
- 5. More arts education in schools
- 6. Increasing compensation for artists
- 7. More volunteers (on boards, as fund-raisers, in the organizations, etc.)
- 8. Theatre and dance manifesting itself more centrally in life
- 9. More theatres opening in more accessible locations (in communities, malls, etc.)

On the advice of the social marketing consultant, the Task Force struggled to reduce these nine behaviours to three and to hone the language of those priorities in such a way that they offered the potential for measurable objectives. Before the Task Force could undertake this process, it worked to define the terms, especially clarifying how it perceived the community, theatre, dance, performing arts, artists, and audiences.

In the course of the prioritization process, it discovered that behavior eight was actually the key to the whole vision. This led to sketching out a first attempt at a vision statement while continuing to identify the top three priorities. The intelligence and dedication of the Task Force asserted itself in the painful process of eliminating, rearranging, clarifying, and trapping in words the goals it believed would most benefit our artistic communities and society as a whole.

Clarifying the vision: Several drafts and deep conversations later, the Task Force agreed that its vision for a social marketing campaign was "to raise public awareness, mobilize support, and galvanize actions in behalf of our conviction that theatre and other performing arts are an essential public good, critical to a healthy society as a source of personal enrichment and a locus for building community." In conversation, it added that it believed theatre and the performing arts were as important to a healthy community as good libraries, clean air, and free speech—an assertion that proves to be rather bold but to generate generally positive responses.

In light of this vision, the Task Force continued to evaluate its priorities and found it difficult to get past the traditional marketing goal of increasing audiences and ticket buying. So it lifted "audience growth" temporarily out of the mix altogether in order to see the other issues more clearly. After an animated and passionate conversation, it put it back in because it was clear that without it, many in the theatre community would not or could not buy in to any plan, and furthermore, it was critical to success of the campaign. After much reworking and clarification to relate to measurable outcomes, the Task Force agreed, in equal order of priority, that a successful social marketing campaign would:

- change the face of audiences for the performing arts to reflect the greater Bay Area community
- maximize private, corporate, foundation, and individual financial support for performing arts
- ➤ make arts education part of the core curriculum in public schools k-12
- identify good public policy for the arts, and energize and engage advocates in support of public policy that reflects the arts as an essential public good
- create a persistent presence in the public arena, enhance and expand media coverage, and stimulate public dialogue about the performing arts and their value to society

Following this agreement, the Task Force followed traditional marketing planning processes and began to develop a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. However, it did not follow the traditional approach to conducting this analysis for Theatre Bay Area, as would seem natural. The Task Force realized that it was thinking globally of our community of theatre and dance companies and artists, and needed to conduct a community SWOT analysis. This proved to be a breakthrough activity, as it was thinking communally for the first time, taking existing tools and applying them in innovative and thought-provoking ways.

With this community landscape in mind, the Task Force examined each of the five goals above and identified target audiences. Task Force members worked in teams of two to determine what was already known in these areas; it created a secondary research overview and bibliography so that it would not be duplicating research that already existed. This lengthy process set the stage for the field research in the community on topics for which data did not already exist.

#### The Research Plan

The primary goal of the overall research plan was to seek a clearer understanding of the available choices to mount a campaign. Specifically, the Task Force was seeking to:

- gather data to further define and refine social marketing campaign goals and objectives
- identify barriers and benefits related to achieving the objectives to assist with development of potential messages
- assess the degree of support that existed among perceived friends of performing arts
- determine what priority TBA constituencies give to accomplishing different objectives and the perceived barriers to accomplishing them
- determine what factor are most likely to influence the attitudes and behaviors of decision-makers
- Identify potential partners, supporters, and opponents

The research plan divided itself over time into three categories: secondary research to determine what already existed; intensive one-on-one phone interviews with selected individuals in the media, arts education, and public policy, and focused group discussions with theatre workers in the extended community. In all, fifty-two interviews and eighty-eight group discussion participants contributed to the understanding of the potential successes, barriers, opportunities, and audiences an extended social marketing campaign could influence.

## Key Respondents: One-on-One Interviews

Background: The Task Force chose to focus on three of the five issues in sixty- to ninety-minute conversations with "friendly" respondents in the key areas of the media, arts education, and public policy. (A great deal of research already exists in audience development, and the scope of such research was beyond the Task Force's means. In addition, the group chose to postpone focused discussions about funding issues until it knew more about other issues.)

The Task Force decided to do one-on-one individual interviews of key informants by telephone, using a prepared script developed in partnership with the consultant. The group chose to interview subjects outside the theatre community (it conducted group discussions with theatre constituencies) but friendly to the intent and potentially sympathetic with the concept. If our "friends" could not support the vision, those hostile to the concept would be impossible to mobilize.

In addition, hostile respondents are not the primary target for any of the actions or the vision. Guided by the consultant, the Task Force agreed that the people who need to take action and who can make the required social changes are those likely to embrace the vision. These combined actions are more likely to influence those less inclined to support the vision than any action aimed directly at active, unfriendly opponents (passive or indifferent people are another issue altogether). The purpose of the social marketing campaign would be less to change attitudes toward the performing arts per se than to stimulate actions and behaviors that create a community of support for the vision.

"Friendly" respondents were grouped into three categories reflecting three of the five goals: media and public forums, public policy advocates and arts educators. The teams of two Task Force members continued to work in their subject areas to review what they knew about individuals working in these areas. The interview goals included identifying respondents' values and attitudes, determining how proposed efforts might benefit each of them (in the social marketing exchange relationship), and gathering information on existing opportunities and barriers to change.

The Task Force identified the first group of potential interviewees; each of these people was solicited for additional recommendations for others to interview. Diversity in geography, organization size and mission, job title and responsibilities, and other factors were considered in the final compilation. Nearly all potential interviewees agreed to be interviewed, with fifty-two actually interviewed. A research coordinator tracked all contacts, connected the interviewer to the interviewee, and ensured follow up. This was a time-consuming activity that was essential to our high return rate.

Volunteer interviewers from the board, staff and theatre community were recruited to join the Task Force until eighteen interviewers were assembled and completed the training process, ultimately conducting between four and six interviews each. A subcommittee of the Task Force worked with the consultant to create standardized survey instruments in each category. The volunteers tested these instruments by interviewing each other to sharpen their techniques. After refinement, each interviewer conducted one pilot community interview, a few additional refinements were made, and the rest of the interviews were conducted on a standard instrument. Interviewers took notes directly onto the survey form by hand, or onto a computer, and submitted computer-typed responses to the consultant for compilation and analysis.

#### Findings: Media Key Respondents

The group interviewed nineteen media respondents in all: eight print and electronic critics/reporters, seven editors, a director of news and public affairs, a radio producer, an associate director of an arts journalism program at a major university, and the president of a private sector media firm. The questions dealt with possibilities for and barriers to expanding media coverage and public discussion of the performing arts.

The overwhelming majority of respondents believe their work has strong local impact, and most believe their organization does a good job reporting on the performing arts; at the same time, most said overall arts coverage by the media is inadequate.

All but one agreed with the premise that the performing arts are an essential public good, yet only half said the media has a responsibility to the arts. Rather, the media's responsibility is to their readers/viewers/listeners. From their perspective, coverage of the arts is important because it serves their audiences. Feature stories emerged as the most likely candidate for expanding coverage. Also mentioned, but less likely, were news stories, economics stories, trend stories, artist profiles, human interest stories, essays, and more thoughtful criticism. Getting arts stories onto page one or at the top of the news is considered unlikely: "art is not newsworthy" unless there is scandal or the news involves the "rich and famous."

As to how expanded coverage might benefit the media itself, half the respondents cited increased readership. A smaller number suggested it might attract more advertising. Benefit to their audiences was identified as providing greater awareness of arts events; of lesser benefit was expanding readers' horizons and choices. How the community might benefit was difficult for respondents to articulate; some said increased coverage would help the arts to thrive (and thus, be self-serving to the arts); some said expanded coverage would help build a sense of community and culture.

Respondents identified reporters as key decision-makers, along with arts editors to a lesser degree. As to what influences decisions, respondents identified a range of factors, including their organization's editorial policy; feedback from their readers and viewers; the appeal of a particular arts house, event or personality (news value); and the personal taste of the reporter or editor.

Respondents identified barriers to expanded coverage to include tight budgets, focus group research, the need to sell papers or raise ratings, the competing needs of the sports

section or breaking news on any given day. They also identified a perception of the arts as accessory, not of central importance. This perception is held both within the news organization and by readers/viewers, they believe. Another perception is that the arts are elitist. Respondents pointed out their fear, or their editor's fear, that more coverage might, in fact, alienate readers/viewers. Stakeholders in the media (editors, publishers, "numbersdriven" managers who worry about readership/ratings" and staff of other departments) might oppose expanded coverage fearing other news would be squeezed out. Top decision-makers fear an over-saturation of arts coverage within the competing news "mix."

#### How can these barriers be overcome?

Respondents said the performing arts need to become more media savvy and improve professionalism ("hire a publicist") while providing timely information. The respondents suggested that arts organizations not over-hype or nag, but try to develop personal relationships with decision-makers. They also said it would help influence decision-makers if readers and viewers "turned up the volume of feedback to articles and reviews." Once again, they mentioned scandal and controversy, although this is probably not the expanded coverage the campaign seeks!

Other suggested arenas for public dialogue included greater outreach at grassroots community and neighborhood levels, use of a high-profile spokesperson (celebrity), employers who would make arts accessible to employees, "guerilla theatre" on the streets for visibility, and use of existing public forums such as city council and school board meetings.

## Critical points learned from the media respondents include:

**Shared core value.** Nonprofit arts organizations share a core value with those in the media: a strong ethos of service. Appealing to this shared value (arts organizations serve audiences and the media serves its readers/listeners/viewers) could be one way to overcome barriers to expanded coverage and a broader public conversation.

PR professionalism. Train arts organizations to become more professional in their outreach to the media, and more realistic in their expectations. It is important to develop personal relationships with media gatekeepers—those who make decisions about coverage. And arts organizations must resist the urge to over-hype. But when they know there is a good story, they make sure the media learn about it early enough in their planning cycle.

**Audience education.** Educate and encourage audiences to expect more of the media in arts coverage, and help them communicate their expectations to the media consistently.

**Public presence.** Make use of existing public forums and opportunities to create a persistence presence in the public mind. Attend public meetings, participate in the civic life of the community, identify as a business and join the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, and civic events.

## Findings: Arts Education Key Respondents

The group interviewed nineteen arts education respondents: four arts education department or organizational directors, one deputy superintendent of a local school district, one member of the state board of education, one member of a local school board, two PTA officers, five school administrators/principals, and five classroom teachers. Eight of the nineteen said that classroom teaching was one of their foremost professional duties; seven of them create and modify curriculum for their own or other teachers' use.

As a group, the arts education key respondents were extremely supportive of the project. This is a group that feels passionately about the arts and its application within the schools. Many of them have been working toward the goal of expanded arts teaching for many years and spoke about the topic with a high degree of sophistication.

Every one of the key informants agreed that the performing arts are an essential public good, and supported the notion that arts education should be part of the core curriculum. Their justifications for this revolved entirely around the good of the children, enhancing their ability to learn in all subjects, becoming more well-rounded, developing an enthusiasm for school, preparing them for a greater array of jobs, improving self-esteem, encouraging cultural literacy, and raising test scores. When asked how the schools themselves might benefit, similar student-focused answers were given. There was virtually no mention of the benefit to teachers, parents, and others in the extended school community. Nor was much attention paid to how the arts community might benefit, except to suggest the development of future audiences.

Including the arts in the k-12 core curriculum was viewed as a difficult but attainable goal. The most common concern was lack of money, as well as a prevalent view that the arts are accessory. Lack of time among overburdened teachers was seen as an additional barrier. Many teachers do not know how to integrate arts into their curriculum and may resist the additional time required to learn this. Concern was also expressed that an expanded arts curriculum may be perceived to take time from other core subjects. Parents were identified as being concerned about direct benefit to their children's ability to score well on tests or to land good jobs.

Every sector of society is impacted by the public school system, therefore the list of people who would need to be involved in the effort was broad. The most commonly named were teachers, parents, artists, school district administrations, and high-income community members, but the list included college students, businesses, religious figures, PTAs, and community activists. All of the respondents expressed optimism that many of these people could be mobilized to take specific actions.

Many groups of people who believe strongly in this goal and have been working hard to realize it already exist. It will be essential for them to be identified and approached. There are numerous educational organizations—local, statewide, and national—that can serve as partners as well.

# Critical points learned from arts education key respondents include:

Multiple fronts. The school system is a highly regulated sector with multiple decision-makers, so the goal would have to be articulated and pursued on many fronts. Decision-makers include local elected school boards, state education authorities, other elected politicians, school superintendents, principals, and administrators. Some theatres companies and artists have become so involved in schools' arts education programs that several respondents viewed them as key decision-makers as well.

Ideological opposition. Those who were identified as opposing expanded arts education are grouped ideologically, not by job description or other criteria. The respondents identified opponents as people who do not enjoy the arts, political conservatives, and those particularly concerned about school budgets.

Overcoming biases. Tactical recommendations focused on proving the worth of arts education by supplying hard educational data, proof of economic benefits, and examples from other communities. There is a bias to overcome at all levels of the system that the arts are accessory, which might be addressed by educating stakeholders. Respondents commonly recommended the personal approach, encouraging one-on-one meetings with decision-makers, as well as holding special events and teacher trainings. Standards and assessment tools should be developed.

Academic standards. There is a great deal of pressure on schools and teachers to prepare their students to test well and to complete requirements for college admission. Any changes in academic standards and student assessments will have an immediate impact in the way arts are taught k-12. Recent changes in the entrance requirements for the University of California system is now causing modest expansion of high school arts education. Parents were repeatedly identified as necessary partners and stakeholders who could be rallied around this issue.

## Findings: Public Policy Key Respondents

The group interviewed fourteen public policy key respondents: four presidents or executive directors of arts advocacy groups, one manager of arts and tourism for a convention and visitors' bureau, one director of musical theatre programs for the NEA, seven city arts coordinators or arts commission members, and one arts advocate lobbyist in the state of California. Among this group, respondents listed their primary responsibilities as advocacy, managing or supervising, fund-raising and public relations/marketing. Fewer than three respondents said they also had responsibility for planning, writing, and allocation of funds.

Most respondents in this group believe that current public policy is insufficient to support or encourage a thriving arts community in the Bay Area. All but one respondent indicated that extensive outreach to and education of the community was necessary in order to support the idea of arts as a public good. Several specifically suggested outreach to schools, while others also addressed access for nontraditional audiences.

The majority in this group identified increased public funding as priority to improved support of the arts community. They identified state, regional, and city funding as critical to success.

Businesses that benefit from a healthy arts community (e.g., restaurants) were identified by many respondents as partners in policy reform. The only factor recognized in opposition to a proposed campaign was a sense that the general public is hesitant to spend money on the arts. Artists are not perceived by policy experts to be politically savvy or to make significant contributions to political campaigns (either vocally or financially) to exert influence on their own behalf.

The greatest benefit of a social marketing arts campaign to policy experts in their work was identified as being a unified voice for and from the artistic community. Unity and joint action emerged as a critical need for policy reform.

## Critical points learned from public policy respondents include:

Politicians as lynchpins. Politicians were named the single greatest factor in creating policy reform, and voters were named as the single greatest influence on politicians. (This may sound obvious, but targeting specific politicians is often neglected in arts and other issues inviting activism.)

Identifying arts impact. In many cases, it is difficult to judge the impact of a particular piece of legislation or public entity action on local arts organizations until it is implemented. "Arts impact" as a concept may be worth developing in the same way that "environmental impact" came to be accepted following focused activity in the seventies and eighties.

**Multiplicity of actions.** Policy experts could not identify a single activity that was in itself effective enough to make policy reform, although letter writing, public assembly, and one-on-one meetings were each mentioned by several respondents.

Connections with arts education. Actions that support legislation, regulations and financial support of arts education in schools need to be coordinated with the arts education objectives identified through our research.

**Tax breaks.** Although unpopular with the general public, tax breaks of several types would be of great benefit to artists and arts organizations.

#### **Focused Group Discussions**

It was clear that unless TBA first understood and mobilized its own constituencies, any plan targeted toward the general public would be ineffective. Theatre and dance devotees have their own barriers to taking action, among them:

- investment in their own art as a priority
- their own day-to-day struggle to survive in the arts
- cynicism about failed past efforts to generate change

- cynicism about follow-through for both themselves and one another
- a sense of entitlement: we shouldn't have to do this kind of thing
- real or perceived lack of time
- no clear sense of precise action needed

Group interviews were organized both for reasons of efficiency and to generate excitement within the community for this initiative. Experts in the fields of media, education, and public policy, were best reached through individual phone interviews. TBA's reputation among its performing arts peers was strong enough to attract a wide array of them for in-person group meetings. TBA hoped that by bringing them into the same room, facilitated conversations could be more complex and far-reaching, and the participants could feed off one another's ideas.

The Task Force divided the community by many variables, seeking diversity in geographic location, scale and budget of their work, and organizational mission. TBA hypothesized that opinions about the field and reactions to social marketing concepts would differ most uniquely from job title to job title, and therefore decided to create groups defined by professional role.

The first group interviewed was TBA's Board of Directors to learn about their priorities and get essential buy-in from them in moving the project forward. With board support for the goals of the project, TBA planned discussions with artistic directors of large budget institutions, artistic directors of small budget companies, managing directors, development directors, marketing directors, education directors, and independent artists. Two other proposed groups (donors and subscribers) were eliminated because of budget constraints, logistical concerns, and a decision to approach both at a later stage of development when there was more information to share. TBA's advisory panel, the Theatre Services Committee, encouraged TBA to add production managers and technical directors, so they became the final group.

The group began the process of identifying individual invitees primarily through brainstorming sessions among the lead project planners. Invitees were chosen across the broadest community possible, weighing numerous characteristics including the length of time in job/community, size of affiliated organization(s), gender, ethnicity, region, and relationship with TBA/likelihood of participation.

The initial facilitated conversation with the Board of Directors had been relatively free form. The discussion questions for other groups were revamped to begin with general attitudes about the field. The first question focused on professional satisfactions, goals and barriers experienced by the participants. Following that, the five proposed objectives were presented for general feedback. Each objective was then discussed individually, often referring to related satisfactions/goals/ barriers that had been identified by the participants. Finally, each participant identified the most and the least important objective, with follow-up questions about levels and types of participation they might be willing to engage in should they be called upon to do so in a future campaign. This format was tested with TBA staff and used in eight discussions over a six-week period in early 2000.

The group contacted each informant, a demanding job requiring repeated follow-ups with invitees to ensure their attendance. In order to recruit a desired ten to twelve participants, the group invited approximately twenty in each job category. Groups eventually ranged in size from nine to fourteen, representing a cross-section of the theatre community. The consultant, Larry Bye, facilitated all group discussions; each one was recorded on tape, and one of the lead project planners was present at each discussion to welcome the participants and take extensive notes.

# The critical points learned from group interviews with theatre people include:

**General.** A deep and pervasive sense of connection to the art runs across all job categories. As one community theatre tech director said, "I always feel like an artist, even when I'm ordering bolts."

While generally supportive of concepts for an initiative, all were skeptical about public impact or participation. A general sense emerged of being underappreciated both in the community and in their own organizations. The top three job-related frustrations all related to money.

Responsiveness both from focus group participants and from interviewees was assisted by the fact that Theatre Bay Area was the convener. People expressed that they felt their time would not be wasted.

All focus group participants and all but one of the key respondents agreed with the premise in the vision statement, which initially included the phrase "as critical to a healthy society as fire departments, free speech, and clean air."

The phrase "fire departments" was dropped when it proved distracting. Respondents invariably pointed out that if their house were on fire, they would rather have a fire department come than a company of actors!

**By occupation.** Tech directors are not generally called upon to be involved in initiatives and so appeared less burned out and apparently more willing to be engaged than some of the other groups; these tech directors appear to be an untapped but untested resource for action.

Development directors "got" the social marketing concepts quickly, because they are the values-interpreters between their organizations and major donors; however, all identified their own companies as their primary focus, so exhibited less enthusiasm for a community-wide initiative.

Development directors fretted that the arts education conversation would dilute the inherent value of the arts, and compete with theatre for funding.

The most cynicism came from managing directors and some marketing directors, although marketing directors saw direct implications for their professional goals.

Education as a goal resonated most strongly across occupations, especially education/outreach and tech. Artistic directors identified lack of professional training as a frustrating

issue, but showed the least interest in arts education. Education/outreach directors were most eager to work together or to meet again as an ongoing group.

In general, representatives of large institutes demonstrated no concept of, or belief in an extended theatre community; small institutes believe in and value the concept of community, but in general see no connection with any benefits of public policy and see only limited impact on them from an extended campaign, as they seemed to believe any campaign would most likely benefit larger organizations.

Individual unaffiliated artists all saw themselves as agents of social change through their art; they also feel inundated by the multiplicity of demands on them. Most have day jobs that conflict with their perceived ability to take action.

### Lessons from the Research Process

Throughout the development process—studying social marketing as a strategy, defining a social vision for support of the arts, identifying behaviors needing influence, and creating a set of objectives—it became clear to all that there is true value in the application of the social marketing philosophy and strategies to the promotion and support of theatre and other performing arts. The fit is complex, but also completely natural. The process itself has generated a nexus of support for applying social marketing within and beyond the theatre communities. The community as represented by theatre artists and workers, public policy workers and experts, arts educators and media representatives has indicated almost universal support for continuing a productive conversation and moving toward strategic plans of action.

Others contemplating a similar process in their communities might consider the lessons TBA learned about this kind of research:

Collective process. The collective process is best guided by collective knowledge of both people and concepts, rather than a single dynamic individual or small "insider" group. The value of group brainstorming as a tool for

breaking through strategic planning barriers cannot be overstated.

Cross-training. Cross-training is needed between arts organizations and most social marketing consultants to identify and address how applications of social marketing need to differ from existing models, which have historically been used primarily in public health.

Training. Trained and committed interviewers are absolutely necessary. Some interviewers reported difficulty or tedium in writing up their interview notes, uncooperative and difficult interviews, and occasionally offensive opinions, even though TBA made every effort to speak with its perceived friends and potential allies. Training and practice in the interview protocol facilitated follow through. (The interviewers were all staff, board volunteers and volunteer theatre service advisors with an existing commitment to TBA and the project.)

Convenor. The role of Theatre Bay Area as convenor contributed significantly to high participation rates and turnout in the focused group conversations. Confidence in TBA's intentions and commitment to follow through were stated as reasons for participation. Dissemination of findings will be an important part of that follow through.

**Vision.** The vision itself served as a locus within the community for creating excitement. Comments include enthusiasm for the clarity of the statement, even when deeper conversation revealed some uncertainty about the sweeping assertion in it. Discussion of the vision as a statement of fact will be an important part of any campaign.

# Suggestions and Recommendations for Next Steps for Theatre Bay Area

Following review and limited dissemination of this report, TBA reconvened the social marketing Task Force to review this report and agree to, refine or redirect the next steps outlined below:

**Partners.** A critical tenet of social marketing holds that community partnerships, forming a web of support and activity and sharing

responsibilities, are required for success (e.g., anti-tobacco campaigns have required support of government entities, health officials, the medical community, community-based organizations, schools, celebrity spokespersons and many, many individuals). Many partners, specific and generic, were identified by key respondents, and follow up is recommended.

In each area, a core of twelve to fifteen partnerships should be identified, recruited for conversation, and convened for training to gain support for the overall goals of the social marketing of theatre. These partners should identify, in a facilitated process, what specific outcomes are desired and what specific actions are required from all parties for success. TBA may be an appropriate convener in conjunction with a professional facilitator. Another organization or multiple organizations may emerge over time as an effective process leader to share responsibilities.

Media. No obvious leader for the media objectives emerged in the conversations with key respondents or the theatre constituency. TBA appears to be well poised to take leadership in pursuit of this objective, with some historical engagement in the issue and with a mission to work on behalf of the industry (rather than in direct self-interest).

Arts education: Where arts education meets public policy, it invites TBA participation. At a school site, school district and local level, many partners are already deeply engaged in actions of reform, fund-raising, standards (recent adoption by the state Department of Education of visual and performing arts standards is the result of two decades of advocacy and grassroots change in the schools). TBA might consider supporting this objective through social marketing training to arts education advocates providing and brokering linkages between arts education organizations with a record of success and partners in policy and media objectives.

**Public policy.** TBA's mission and history also positions the organization to take an active role in defining and supporting public policy-related actions with other partners. No organization emerged as an obvious leader here, but many organizational partners were identified with years of related experience. The shifting sands

of social change make policy a complex issue. A flexible, responsive, and proactively visionary partnership will be required to make sustained and sustainable impact. (For example, the attention paid to the need for local policies regarding affordable space for arts organizations in San Francisco would inform and in some cases transform respondents' surveys if conducted today.)

**Training.** TBA can play a vital role in providing and/or facilitating the training that will be required for partners in any process. The original Task Force might be considered as a resource for creating and providing training in social marketing as a philosophy and strategy for the theatre and performing arts communities. Some ad hoc training has already occurred; two of the authors of this report provided an introductory training at a national meeting hosted by Theatre Communications Group to discuss innovations in marketing, and one of the authors routinely trains through providing summaries of our process and learnings to members of the local theatre community. Many of the other members of the Task Force are trained public speakers and have the potential to increase knowledge of and exposure to social marketing concepts in an effective and inspirational manner.

**Dissemination.** TBA will make this report accessible on its Web site and work with a variety of organizations to disseminate the findings. A presentation was made at a Theatre Communications Group (TCG) regional conference in Denver fall of 2000. TBA made a report at the annual gathering of the Association of Performing Arts Organizations (APASO) in Chicago in March of 2001 and to the California Arts Council in November of 2001. TCG will also make the report available to its constituents through its publications. Other avenues for dissemination include Grantmakers for the Arts and California Advocates for the Arts. It will also be made available to various funders. The goal is to stimulate interest in and dialogue about the arts and social marketing.

For further information, contact the report's authors, Belinda Taylor, at *btvalley@aol.com* or Sabrina Klein at *sabrina@juliamorgan.org*.

#### **Interviews with Key Respondents**

#### Media Interviewees (n=19)

1 president of a private sector media firm 1 radio producer 1 associate director of the Arts Journalism Program, Columbia University 1 director of radio news and public affairs department 7 newspaper editors 8 critics/reporters/journalistic writers

#### Primary responsibilities:

writing (11) editing (5) other: fund-raising, public relations/ marketing, allocation of funds, planning (fewer than 4 each) managing/supervising (5)

#### Education Interviewees (n=19)

4 directors of departments or organizations concerned with arts education 1 deputy superintendent of a local school

system

1 member of a state board of education

1 member of a local school board

 $5\ school\ administrators/principals$ 

5 teachers2 PTA officers

#### **Primary responsibilities:**

teaching (8)
curriculum development (7)
advocacy (6)
managing/supervising (5)
creating/modifying policies (5)
public relations/marketing (4)
professional development
acquisition/allocation of
creation/coordination (4)
public funding (4)
other: fund-raising, mentoring, raising test
scores (fewer than 3 each)

#### Policy Interviewees (n=14)

4 presidents/executive directors of arts advocacy groups
1 manager of arts and tourism for a convention and visitors' bureau
1 director of musical theatre for the NEA

7 city arts coordinators/arts commission members 1 arts advocate lobbyist

#### Primary responsibilities:

advocacy (5)
managing/supervising (4)
fund-raising (3)
public relations/marketing (3)
other: planning, writing, allocation of funds
(fewer than 3 each)

## Members of the TBA Social Marketing Task Force

#### Christina Augello,

**Executive Director, EXIT Theatre** 

#### Sabrina Klein.

former Executive Director, Theatre Bay Area (now Executive Director of the Julia Morgan Center for the Arts)

#### Mary Beth Smith,

Marketing Director, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

#### **Andrew Smith.**

Marketing Director, American Conservatory Theater

#### Patty Silver,

Founding Member, Word for Word

#### Belinda Taylor,

former Deputy Director for Communications, Theatre Bay Area (now Director of the Arts Marketing Institute, California Arts Council)

#### John Warren,

Artistic Director, Unconditional Theatre

#### Richard Newirth,

Director of Cultural Affairs, San Francisco Art Commission

# Prepared in Conjunction with Theatre Bay Area's Research Initiative Into the Uses of Social Marketing in the Performing Arts

#### **Bibliography**

#### **BOOKS:**

The Arts Equation: Forging a Vital Link Between Performing Artists and Educators, Bruce D. Taylor (Backstage Books, Watson-Guptill Publications, 1999)

Can We Rescue the Arts for America's Children?: Coming to Our Senses — 10 Years Later, Charles Fowler (American Council for the Arts, 1988)

The Challenge to Reform Arts Education: What Role Can Research Play?, Ed. David B. Pankratz & Kevin V. Mulcahy (American Council for the Arts, 1989)

Many Voices, Many Opportunities: Cultural Pluralism and American Arts Policy, Clement Alexander Price (American Council for the Arts, 1994)

Multiculturalism and Public Arts Policy, David B. Pankratz (Bergen & Garvey, 1993)

Race, Ethnicity and Participation in the Arts, Paul DiMagio & Francie Ostrower (Seven Locks Press, for the National Endowment for the Arts, 1992)

Reinventing the Wheel: A Design for Student Achievement in the 21st Century, Laura Loyacono (National Conference of State Legislators, 1992)

Social Marketing: Strategies for Changing Public Behavior, Philip Kotler & Eduardo L. Roberto (The Free Press/Simon & Schuster, 1989)

The Stage Directions Guide to Getting and Keeping Your Audience, Ed. Stephen Peithman

& Neil Offen (Heinemann, 1999)

**Standing Room Only,** Philip Kotler & Joanne Scheff (Harvard Business School Press, 1997)

**Strategic Media: Designing a Public Interest Campaign**, Ed. Kathy Bonk & Phil Sparks
(Communications Consortium Media Center, 1991)

**Toward a New Era in Arts Education**, Ed. John H. McLaughlin (American Council for the Arts, 1988)

# REPORTS, GUIDES & WORKING PAPERS:

20/21: A Regional Cultural Plan for the New Millennium — San Jose, Santa Clara County, Silicon Valley, Ed. Wolf Keens & Co. and Harvard Project PACE (San Jose Arts Commission & Arts Council of Santa Clara County, 1997)

Americans and the Arts: Highlights from a Nationwide Survey of the Attitudes of the American People Toward the Arts, Ed. Louis Harris (Scholastic Inc, for American Council for the Arts & National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, 1996)

The Arts: A Competitive Advantage for California (KPMG Marwick & California Arts Council, 1994)

Arts Education for the 21st Century American Economy, Bruce O. Boston (American Council for the Arts, 1995)

**Arts Funding: An Update on Foundation Trends,**Loren Renz & Steven Lawrence (The Foundation

Center & Grantmakers in the Arts, 1998)

Arts in the Local Economy: Economic Impact Study (National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, 1994)

Arts Work: A Call for Arts Education for All California Students, Ed. Sheila Bruton (Superintendent's Task Force on the Visual and Performing Arts, 1997)

Bay Area Market Fact Guide, 1998: The Guide to Vital Statistics and Demographics for Bay Area Business, Ed. Janet Colwell (Business Journal, City of Oakland & Business Times)

Building America's Communities II: A Compendium of Arts and Community Development Programs (Americans for the Arts, 1997)

**Creative America: A Report to the President** (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1997)

Cultural Districts: The Arts as a Strategy for Revitalizing Our Cities, Hilary Anne Frost-Kumpf (Americans for the Arts, 1998)

Data on Arts Organizations: A Review and Needs Assessment with Design Implications, Deborah A. Kaple, Lori Morris, Ziggy Rivkin-Fish & Paul DiMaggio (Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, Princeton University, 1996)

Gaining the Arts Advantage: Lessons from School Districts that Value Arts Education (President's Committee on the Arts & Arts Education Partnership, 1999)

**Hands on Social Marketing: A Step-by-Step Guide,** Nedra Kline Weinreich (Sage Publications, 1999)

Index of Silicon Valley: Measuring Progress Toward a 21st Century Community, 1996 (Joint Venture, 1996) Index of Silicon Valley: Measuring Progress Toward a 21st Century Community, 1997 (Joint Venture, 1997)

Inside/Out: A Guide to Arts and Arts Education Resources for Children and Teens in San Francisco, Third Edition (Arts Education Funders' Collaborative, San Francisco Art Commission, 1998)

Making Sense of the Numbers: Estimating Arts Participation in America, Steven J. Tepper (Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, Princeton University, 1998)

National Models Survey: Audience

Development & Neighborhood Development
(Appendix to Wolf Organization Report)

A Practical Guide to Arts Participation Research, Ed. AMS Planning (National Endowment for the Arts, 1995)

Proposed Arts Policy for the City and County of San Francisco (San Francisco Arts Commission, 1991)

Public Opinion and Political Vulnerability: Why Has the National Endowment for the Arts Been Such an Attractive Target?, Paul DiMaggio & Becky Pettit DiMaggio (Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, Princeton University, 1999)

Public Sentiments Towards the Arts: A Critical Reanalysis of 13 Opinion Surveys, Becky Pettit & Paul DiMaggio (Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, Princeton University, 1998)

A Public Survey of Participation and Attitudes Towards Arts and Culture in Santa Clara County and the City of San Jose (AMS Planning & Research, for the City of San Jose & the Arts Council of Santa Clara Couny, 1997)

Reporting the Arts: News Coverage of Arts and Culture in America (National Arts Journalism Program, Columbia University, 1999) Resisting Invisibility: Arts Organizations and the Pursuit of Persistent Presence, Margart J. Wyszomirski, Amy McClellan, Shelly Power & Darlene Rebello-Rao (Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, 1997)

Resources for Studying Public Participation in the Arts, Becky Pettit (Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, Princeton University, 1997)

Rethinking Stabilization: Strengthening Arts Organizations During Times of Change, Jane Culbert, William Keens, Laura Lewis Mandeles & Thomas Wolf (Strategic Grantmaker Services, for the Ford Foundation, 1996)

San Francisco: A City Connected to the Arts (San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association, 1998)

Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 1997: Summary Report (National Endowment for the Arts, 1998)

A Teen Programs How-To Kit (Walker Art Center)

United Arts Fundraising 1998: A Statistical Report about the Nation's United Arts Funds During the Fiscal Year 1997 (Americans for the Arts, 1999)

**Untapped Public Funding for the Arts,** Ed. Dian Magie (National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, 1995)

Working Relationships: The Arts, Education and Community Development, Ed. Nancy Welch & Paul Fisher (National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, 1995)

## PERIODICALS, ARTICLES & ESSAYS:

**American Diversity** (American Demographics Magazine, 1991)

"Art for Community's Sake", San Francisco Chronicle, August 1, 1999, Arts p. 1, Rick DelVecchio

Arts Reach, vol. VII, no. 3, December 1998/January 1999

Arts Reach, vol. VII, no. 4, February 1999

Arts Reach, vol. VII, no. 5, March 1999

Arts Reach, vol. VII, no. 6, April 1999

Arts Reach, vol. VII, no. 7, May 1999

"Asking Donors to Do More", Arts Reach vol. VII, no. 8, June/July 1999, Deborah Block & Paul Karps

Building Audiences: Stories from America's Theatres, August 1996 (Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund)

**Building Audiences: Stories from America's Theatres,** January 1997 (Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund)

**Building Audiences: Stories from America's Theatres,** December 1997 (Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund)

"Building Closer Ties with Audiences", Arts Reach vol. VII, no. 8, June/July 1999, John Zorn

Class Notes, Winter 1999/2000 (College Kids)

"Co-op Advertising Vastly Improves Theaters' Buying Power", Arts Reach vol. VIII, no. 1, October 1999. Andrew F. Holtz

"Culture Has No Infrastructure", New York Times, August 1999, Op-Ed, Alice Goldbarb Marquis

"Heavyweight Foundation Throws Itself Behind Idea of a Cultural Policy", New York Times, August 2, 1999, p. B1, Judith H. Dobrzynski

"How Many Californians?", California Counts: Population Trends and Profiles, vol. 1, no. 1, October 1999 (Public Policy Institute of California)

International Journal of Arts Management, vol. 1, no. 1, Fall 1998, Ed. François Colbert

"Life Without Mozart"—Can We Afford It?: Why Government Should Subsidize the Arts, Arts Reach, John Zorn

"Mayor Offers City Cash for School Art", San Francisco Chronicle, September 9, 1999, p. A1, Julian Guthrie

"A National Commitment to the Arts" 200 Ways to Make America Better (*George* Magazine, 1999)

"Theatre Facts 1998", American Theatre, July/August 1999 (Theatre Communications Group)

**"Why Waste All Our Money on the 'Arts'?",** Capitol Hill Blue, August 21, 1999, Robert H. Knight & Allan Dobras

#### **PAMPHLETS:**

**Amusement Taxes for the Arts,** Martha I Dodson (Americans for the Arts)

Arts Programs for At-Risk Youth: How U.S. Economies are Using the Arts to Rescue Their Youth and Deter Crime (Americans for the Arts)

Hotel-Motel Taxes for the Arts, Ed. Randy Cohen (AMS Planning & Research, for National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies)

Property Tax: Funding for the Arts, Amanda Rafool & Scott Mackey (Americans for the Arts, 1998)

**Sales Taxes for the Arts,** Duncan M. Webb (Americans for the Arts)

Workplace Giving: Raising Funds for the Arts, Robert Bush (Americans for the Arts, 1998)